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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2613
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RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3006
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2391
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000820

Dept for SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD and TFGG01

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: TFGG01: Reactions in Kyrgyz Media to the Crisis in Georgia

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Most Kyrgyz newspapers continue in a sporadic summer publishing schedule, and only a few analysts have spoken out on the events in Georgia. Television media is overwhelmingly dominated by reports based on information from Russian sources. Internet forums are overflowing with mixed commentary on the situation. Most opinion pieces in the media support a peaceful resolution to the conflict, but also note that Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia could be susceptible to separatism or Russian meddling.
End Summary.

Newspapers

¶2. (SBU) During the summer season, most newspapers either go on vacation or publish sporadically. Bishkek's most widely-read paper, Vecherney Bishkek, continues to publish daily. Reports in the paper on the fighting in Georgia have been limited to reprints of articles from Russian press. There has so far been no independent local reporting, beyond small opinion interviews with local analysts. While reporting in the Russian-language media has been limited, reports in Kyrgyz-language media newspapers been briefer still.

¶3. (SBU) Anti-American and pro-Russia Beliye Parus newspaper republished on its website many of the commentaries that have appeared elsewhere on internet wire services. The author of the compilation did comment that President Bakiyev's recently announced "short vacation" on Issyk Kul lake is a "favorite tactic of Kyrgyz politicians in critical moments of history," but predicted that the current situation will not allow him to rest peacefully.

Television

¶4. (SBU) Television coverage of events in Georgia are almost exclusively limited to Russian media reports rebroadcast on local television frequencies. Local stations have reported on President Bakiyev's instructions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to begin consultations on the crisis with other Commonwealth of Independent States members. There has been no local reporting independent of

Russian media on day to day events inside Georgia since the crisis began.

Wire Services

¶ 5. (SBU) Traditionally anti-American 24.kg has been the most active in soliciting local opinion on Georgia. Political analyst Askarbek Mambetaliev commented on 8/11 that "the majority of people in the NIS do not have access to non-Russian language media and therefore cannot objectively evaluate the situation in Georgia." He goes on to add that "the danger of this tragedy is that if South Ossetia, the legal territory of Georgia, is successfully separated, it forms a precedent that gives the right to the President of Russia to 'protect the lives and property of Russian citizens, no matter where they may be located' using those same methods. Who then will give the guarantee that this example will not inspire chauvinists to invade Kyrgyzstan?"

¶ 6. (SBU) Member of Parliament Murat Juraev said in 24.kg on 8/11, before departing on a fact-finding trip to South Ossetia organized by the group "For Russia," that "I am for the integrity of Georgia, and am not a supporter of the breaking away of any piece of a sovereign state, otherwise all these events can form a chain reaction. Remember Kosovo, Abkhazia. Remember how Yugoslavia fell apart, our Central Asia is also susceptible to these trends as well."

¶ 7. (SBU) Political Analyst Mars Sariev says in the neutral and professional wire service AKIPress.kg that "Kyrgyzstan, as a member of the CSTO, will support the Russian position. You see what is happening in Georgia; the same thing can happen here." He goes on to comment that "this is not a conflict between the Ossetians and Georgians, but we should understand that this is a conflict between

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Russia and the USA." Sariev also says, "You can also understand Russia. Georgia enters into NATO, and next it will be Kavkaz then Tatarstan. The West is worried about energy pipelines from Central Asia into Europe. All this is a big game with the Ossetians and the poor Georgians caught in the middle. We too can find ourselves in this situation..."

Public Opinion on the Internet

¶ 8. (SBU) In contrast to the relatively limited number of opinions published in traditional media, there has been an explosion of posts in Kyrgyzstan's web forums. In the most popular web forum, diesel.elcat.kg, as of 8/12, 9 separate threads have been started on Georgia with a total of at least 4677 separate posts and at least 95374 page views.

¶ 9. (SBU) Comments in the threads have been mixed, but have largely followed a pro-Russian tone. Many posts have been trading rumors and theories about Russia's ultimate goals in Georgia and speculating of the involvement of external parties, namely the United States, in the conflict.

Comment

¶ 10. (SBU) The lack of local coverage of events in Georgia is not surprising. Media in Kyrgyzstan has traditionally been extremely parochial in outlook and focus. It is interesting to note the disparity between the relatively unfettered and energetic discussions on the internet, and the relative lack of coverage on traditional local media. Reporting to date also shows the continued strong influence of media from Russia on popular opinion throughout Kyrgyzstan.

Litzenberger